

Laughter yoga as a way of stress management

Hello, Priscilla Mangwiro here from Cancer Association of Zimbabwe. As The Cancer Association of Zimbabwe we are not only limited to cancer issues. We talk about different issues affecting people because this person who is or who can be affected by cancer is the same person who is affected by stress and COVID 19 etc.

So today we are going to talk about laughter as a stress management technique. People are so stressed about the COVID 19 pandemic, there are many uncertainties surrounding it, we don't know when this will end. Others are worried about loss of income, dwindling food supplies, being 'stuck' at home all day long because for others home is the source of stress. Yet others are worried about contracting the disease itself, like our frontline health workers and other care givers. So there are many sources of stress such



Hence it is necessary to find ways of managing stress in a positive way. Maybe before i get into detail about laughter as a way of managing stress i would like to briefly talk about what is stress and some of the signs or symptoms to watch out for.

Stress comes from the English word 'stresse' which is short for 'distresse' or distress.

- ⇒ Stress is the body's reaction to a demand, whether it is a good change or a bad change because even the imagined change can still prove to be stressful.
- ⇒ Every area of your life produces stress.
- ⇒ Stress is not always bad, it is very necessary for life.
- ⇒ You need stress for creativity, learning, and your very survival.
- ⇒ Stress is only harmful when it becomes overwhelming and interrupts the healthy state of equilibrium that your nervous system needs to remain in balance.
- ⇒ Stress management is an ongoing practice and incorporation of resiliency into your lifestyle, you can learn to manage your stress level and increase your ability to cope with life's challenges.

Stress is related to perception

- ⇒ How you perceive a stressor or the meaning you give to it, determines its effects on you. Studies show that our responses to stressful events can be altered by whether we view something as a threat or a challenge. (*A challenge is something with you can overcome yet a threat is something which is fear related*)
- ⇒ Be optimistic.
- ⇒ Optimism is about knowing how much control you have in a situation and expecting a good outcome.

Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking and drinking too much.
- Bingeing on junk or comfort food.
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer.
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities.
- Using pills or drugs to relax.
- Sleeping too much.
- Procrastinating.
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems.
- Taking out your stress on others.
- Lashing out, angry outbursts or physical violence.

Relax

- Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your body and mind. Techniques include progressive muscle relaxation, visualization, deep breathing, meditation, listening to music, yoga and laughter therapy.

WORRYING IS A HABIT THAT CAN BE CHALLENGED

Laughter therapy / yoga

Laughter yoga information

Laughter yoga was started by in the early 90s by an Indian medical doctor, Dr. Madan Kataria. In March 1995, while writing an article *Laughter - The Best Medicine* for a health journal, he discovered many modern scientific studies, which described in depth, the many proven benefits of Laughter on the human mind and body. In particular, Dr. Kataria was impressed by Norman Cousins' book *Anatomy of an Illness* and the research work by Dr. Lee Berk. Profoundly inspired and being a man of action, Dr. Kataria immediately decided to field-test the impact of laughter on himself and others.

Starting with just five people, at 7 am on March 13, 1995, at a public park in his neighbourhood in Mumbai, India; he launched the first Laughter Club. These five founding members laughed together in the park that day to the amusement of bystanders; and the small group quickly grew to more than 50 participants, within a few days.

- ⇒ Laughter is the best medicine. You do not need to be happy or have a sense of humour to benefit from a good laugh.
- ⇒ You will still benefit from fake laughter - any giggle will do. Purposeful laughing, you are laughing not because there is anything funny but for the health benefit. Laughter is contagious
- ⇒ Scientists have estimated that laughing 100 times (About 15mins) equals the same physical exertion as a 10 minute workout on a rowing machine or 15 minutes on a stationary bike.
- ⇒ Laughing works out the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, and increases the levels of antibodies and immune cells in the body.

Benefits of laughter therapy

- ⇒ Reduces stress hormones
- ⇒ Helps reduce wrinkles (slows down the aging process)
- ⇒ Humour gives a more light hearted perspective
- ⇒ Social benefits (connection, attraction)

SUMMARY

- L**aughter releases endorphins, giving us the 'feel good factor'
- A**cts as aerobic exercise and is like 'internal jogging'
- U**nleashes inhibitions, breaks down barriers
- G**reat team building tool encourages better communication
- H**elps boost our immune system which helps us resist disease
- T**ones muscles, improves respiration and circulation
- E**ncourages positive thinking and creativity
- R**elaxes the whole body by reducing stress and tension

Here are a few tips on how to do laughter yoga

It sounds crazy but worth a try. Loosen all tight clothing and relax.

There are 4 steps which can be done interchangeably

Step 1: Clapping and warming up

- **Warm up** by Clap hands parallel to each other for full finger-to-finger and palm-to-palm contact, thus stimulating Acupressure points in our hands to increase energy levels.

Step 2: Deep breathing exercises

- Do deep breathing 3 times (in through your nose and out through your mouth)
- After each laugh you do deep breathing

Step 3: Child like playfulness

- This helps to laugh without a reason because if you want to reason too much you wont be able to enjoy the sessions.

Step 4: Laughter Exercises

There are many types of laughter some which you can create your self.

Today we will do telephone laughter.

Teach yourself to laugh. You can laugh as an individual or as a family or online group. Laugh at every opportunity you get. Laugh laugh until you laugh.

So in our next session we are going to do a mini session or demo of laughter yoga and i introduce various laughter types and also talk about signs and symptoms of stress in detail.

Thanks for watching. Lets meet here every Tuesday from 1230hrs and please make sure you subscribe to Facebook Live notifications. You can also like and share the video.

Till next time.